

THOMPSON, CHENEY, & LOFGREN OPENING STATEMENTS AT SELECT COMMITTEE HEARING

Jun 13, 2022

- As Delivered -

Chairman Thompson: “Good morning. Last week, the Select Committee laid out a preview of our initial findings about a conspiracy, overseen and directed by Donald Trump, to overturn the results of the 2020 Presidential election and block the transfer of power—a scheme unprecedented in American history.

“My colleagues and I don’t want to spend time talking about ourselves during these hearings, but as someone who’s run for office a few times, I can tell you: at the end of a campaign, it all comes down to the numbers. The numbers tell you the winner and the loser.

“For the most part, the numbers don’t lie.

“But if something doesn’t add up with the numbers, you go to court to get resolution. And that’s the end of the line. We accept those results. That’s what it means to respect the rule of law. That’s what it means to seek elected office in our democracy.

“Because those numbers aren’t just numbers.

“They are votes. They are your votes. They are the will and the voice of the people. And the very least we should expect from any person seeking a position of public trust is the acceptance of the will of the people—win or lose.

“Donald Trump didn’t.

“He didn’t have the numbers. He went to court, and he still didn’t have the numbers. He lost.

“But he betrayed the trust of the American people. He ignored the will of the voters. He lied to his supporters and the country. And he tried to remain in office after the people had voted him out—and the courts upheld the will of the people.

“This morning we’ll tell the story of how Donald Trump lost an election—and knew he lost an election—and as a result of his loss, decided to wage an attack on our democracy. An attack on the American people, by trying to rob you of your voice in our democracy. And in doing so, lit the fuse that led to the horrific violence of January 6th, when a mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol, sent by Donald Trump, to stop the transfer of power.

“Today, my colleague from California, Ms. Lofgren, and our witnesses, will detail the Select Committee’s findings on these matters.

“But first, I’ll recognize our distinguished Vice Chair, Ms. Cheney of Wyoming, for any opening statement she’d care to offer.”

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Vice Chair Cheney: “Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.

“Last week, this Committee began by outlining a seven part plan overseen by President Trump to overturn the 2020 election. Today, we are looking at the initial part of that plan: President Trump’s effort to convince millions of Americans that the election was stolen from him by overwhelming fraud.

“A federal court has already reviewed elements of the Committee’s evidence on this point, and said this: ‘In the months following the election, numerous credible sources – from the President’s inner circle to agency leadership and statisticians – informed President Trump and Dr. Eastman that there was no evidence of election fraud’ sufficient to overturn the 2020 Presidential election.

“The Court’s opinion methodically documents each of the principal reasons for that conclusion, and I would urge all of those watching to read it. Today we will begin to show the American people some of our evidence.

“Today, you will hear much more from former Attorney General Bill Barr’s recorded testimony, and you will hear in greater detail what others in the Department told President Trump – that his claims of election fraud were nonsense.

“You will also hear much more from President Trump’s own campaign experts, who had also concluded that his fraud claims could not be supported.

“Let me briefly focus on just three points now.

“First, you will hear firsthand testimony that the President’s campaign advisors urged him to await the counting of votes and not to declare victory on election night. The President understood even before the election that many more Biden voters had voted by mail – because President Trump ignored the advice of his campaign experts and told his supporters only to vote in person.

“Donald Trump knew before the election that the counting of those mail-in ballots in several states would not begin until late in the day and would not be complete for multiple days.

“This was expected, reported, and widely known.

“You will hear testimony that President Trump rejected the advice of his campaign experts on election night, and instead followed the course recommended by an apparently inebriated Rudy Giuliani, to just claim he won, and insist that the vote counting stop – to falsely claim everything was fraudulent.

“He falsely told the American people that the election was not legitimate, in his words ‘a major fraud.’ Millions of Americans believed him.

“Second, pay attention to what Donald Trump and his legal team said repeatedly about Dominion voting machines – far flung conspiracies with a deceased Venezuelan Communist allegedly pulling the strings.

“This was ‘complete nonsense,’ as Bill Barr said.

“Trump’s own campaign advisors, his Department of Justice, and his cybersecurity experts all told him the same thing. Here, for example, is White House lawyer Eric Herschmann; his view was shared by many of the Trump team who we interviewed:

[multimedia]

“And third, as Mike Pence’s staff started to get a sense for what Donald Trump had planned for January 6th, they called the campaign experts to give them a briefing on election fraud and all the other election claims.

“On January 2nd, the General Counsel of the Trump Campaign, Matthew Morgan – this is the campaign’s chief lawyer -- summarized what the Campaign had concluded weeks earlier – that none of the arguments about fraud or anything else could actually change the outcome of the election.

[multimedia]

“As is obvious, this is before the attack on the Capitol. The Trump campaign legal team knew there was no legitimate argument – fraud, irregularities, or anything – to overturn the election. And yet, President Trump went ahead with his plans for January 6th anyway.

“Mr. Chairman, hundreds of our countrymen have faced criminal charges, many are serving criminal sentences because they believed what Donald Trump said about the election and they acted on it. They came to Washington D.C. at his request, they marched on the Capitol at his request, and hundreds of them besieged and invaded the building at the heart of our Constitutional Republic.

“As one conservative editorial board put recently: ‘Mr. Trump betrayed his supporters by conning them on Jan. 6, and he is still doing it.’

“Another conservative editorial board, one that has long supported President Trump, said last week: Donald Trump ‘won’t stop insisting that 2020 was ‘stolen’ even though he has offered no proof that it’s true.’

“And this: [Donald Trump] now ‘clings to more fantastical theories, such as Dinesh D’Souza’s debunked ‘2000 Mules,’ even as recounts in Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin confirm Trump lost.’

“Those are the correct conclusions to draw from the evidence gathered by this Committee. We have much more evidence to show the American people on this point than we can reasonably show in one hearing.

“But today we will begin.

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.”

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Chairman Thompson: “Without objection, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California, Ms. Lofgren, for an opening statement.”

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Representative Lofgren: “Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

“In our opening hearing we gave an overview of our investigation into the January 6th attack. The plot to overthrow the election was complex and had many parts, which we’ll explore in remaining hearings. But today we examine the false narrative that the 2020 election was ‘stolen’.

“Former President Trump’s plan to overturn the election relied on a sustained effort to deceive millions of Americans with knowingly false claims of election fraud. All elements of the plot relied on convincing his supporters about these false claims.

“Today, we’ll demonstrate the 2020 election was not stolen. The American people elected President Joe Biden. We’ll present evidence that Mr. Trump’s claims of election fraud were false, that he and his closest advisors knew those claims were false but they continued to peddle them anyway, right up until moments before a mob of Trump supporters attacked the Capitol.

“We’ll also show that the Trump campaign used these false claims of election fraud to raise hundreds of millions of dollars from supporters who were told their donations were for the legal fight in the courts.

“But the Trump Campaign didn’t use the money for that. The Big Lie was also a big rip off.

“The former President laid the groundwork for these false claims well in advance of the election. As early as April 2020, Mr. Trump claimed that the only way he could lose an election would be as a result of fraud:

[multimedia]

“Mr. Trump decided even before the election that, regardless of the facts and the truth, if he lost the election he would claim it was rigged. Mr. Trump was right about one thing: it did not end well.

“On election night, Mr. Trump claimed even before the votes were counted, that his loss was a result of fraud.

“Thursday, we had testimony from Attorney General Barr about the Department of Justice’s investigation of Mr. Trump’s fraud claims. Barr told Trump directly that his claims were ‘BS.’

“Yet after hearing the truth and that warning from his Attorney General, Mr. Trump continued to peddle the false claims of fraud.

“You’ll hear detailed testimony from Attorney General Barr describing the various election fraud claims the Department of Justice investigated. He’ll tell you how he told Mr. Trump, repeatedly, that there was no merit to those claims.

“Mr. Barr will tell us that Mr. Trump’s election-night claims of fraud were made without regard to the truth, and before it was even possible to look for evidence of fraud.

“Attorney General Barr wasn’t alone. You’ll see and hear today, other Department of Justice officials and senior advisors to Mr. Trump that they told him that claims he was making were not supported by evidence.

“The election fraud claims were false. Mr. Trump’s closest advisors knew it. Mr. Trump knew it.

“That didn’t stop him from pushing the false claims and urging his supporters to, ‘fight like hell’ to ‘take back their country.’



“After he lost the election, various legal challenges were made. You’ll hear testimony today from a renowned Republican election litigation lawyer who will explain the normal process by which candidates challenge an election.

“Rather than accept the results of the election and the decisions of the courts, Mr. Trump pursued a different strategy. He tried to convince the American people the election had been stolen. Many of his supporters believed him. Many still believe him today.

“The attack on January 6th was a direct and predictable result of Mr. Trump’s decision to use false claims of election fraud to overturn the election and cling to power.”

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